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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses possibilities for political scientists to work with an adult non-campus public through grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Humanities are defined in terms of those academic disciplines concerned with the records, interpretation, and evaluation of human knowledge. The author describes his success with six different grant proposals and thirty different programs in eastern Oklahoma towns and cities. His focus has been to teach political concepts through the interdisciplinary approaches of literature and politics. The programs have dealt with the quality of life in rural America, future problems, problems of the aged and youth, Cherokee history, and consumer rights. The works of William Faulkner and of Arna Bontemps are featured. The author concludes that the political scientist's training in analyzing man and his environment provide him with a unique perspective as a facilitator of humanities programs. (KC)

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THE POLITICAL SCIENTIST AS AN ACADEMIC HUMANIST

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In recent years political science journals have brought to light the problems facing political scientists in the upcoming decade of the eighties.[1]

> "The major problem facing the political science profession is easy to summarize: during the 1980's and 1990's there will be an extremely severe imbalance between the supply and demand for Political Scientists. Forecasts differ, but the total number of undergraduates in the country should shrink during the next two decades by 25%.[2]

This paper focuses on how a political scientist from rural Oklahoma has gone outside the classroom to adult community audiences teaching political concepts through the interdisciplinary approaches of Literature and Politics.[3]

> "The use of fiction can be a refreshing addition to the current political science teaching material. Reading political fiction can also serve as a transition into the less familiar factual and theoretical material written by political scienticts."[4]

Using this method this author has reached adult publics in rural eastern Oklahoma through a combination of grants from the Oklahoma Humanities Committee, the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and local non-profit organizations such as public libraries or museums.

According to the Congressional Act authorizing the National Endowment for the Humanities and the state programs, under which the Oklahoma Humanities Committee operates, the humanities are defined in terms of those academic disciplines concerned with the records, interpretation, and evaluation of human knowledge and experience. "As defined in the legislation, these fields include: history, philosophy, languages, literature, archeology, jurisprudence, history and criticism of the arts, ethics, comparative religions, and those aspects of the social sciences employing historical or philosophical approaches."[5]

An academic humanist would be a scholar defined as a person possessing a terminal degree in one of the academic disciplines of the hunamities.

For the 1977-78 year, political science represented only 4% of all scholars-teachers participating in Oklahoma Humanities programs[7] indicating, in Oklahoma at least, the newness of the idea that political scientists can find a vehicle for the expression of the ideas of their profession through the humanities.

> "The humanities are associated with and overlap the liberal arts---without exposure to the cultural, intellectual, and moral traditions that are our heritage, we are excluded from a common world that crosses generations...The quality of individual life and social life depends on the qualities of mind--cultural, intellectual, and moral--that we achieve.[8]

Professionally, the political scientist is uniquely trained in defining and analyzing qualities of social, moral, and theologic development as well as recognizing problems of the human condition. "The humanities open up horizons in which to perceive problems rather than provide a few tactics with which to retire them."[9]

During the past three years this author has been the project director and chief academic humanist of six different grants awarded by the Oklahoma Humanities Committee[10] and has directed over thirty different programs in seven eastern Oklahoma cities of under 12,000 population. These programs generally dealt with the quality of life in rural America. Specific topics were: Life in a Small Town in the Year 2,000, Problems of the Aged, Problems of Youth, Humanistic uses of Leisure Time, Cherokee History, The Role of Women in Cherokee Life, Myths and Legends of the Cherokees, The Small Town Businessman, and Rights of the Consumer.

Eastern Oklahoma is a seemingly fertile area for programs in the

humanities that deal with current social issues because of limited education, low socio-economic status, and diverse ethnic population. In the seven-county area immediately surrounding Tahlequah, Oklahoma (the Capitol of the Cherokee Nation) and Northeastern Oklahoma State University, where the author is an Associate Professor of Political Science and has taught for the past twelve years, 61.3% of persons over 25 have less than a high school education. Only 6.5% of those over 25 have a college degree. Family incomes were low in these seven counties by almost every standard. The 1970 median family income was only $5,824.00, nearly 25% of families were below poverty level. 25% of the families received mean income of $2,064.00 with 1/3 of those families receiving public assistance. In 1970 the total number of persons in poverty in these seven counties was 55,200, 29.7% of all persons.[11] The Native American population of the seven county contiguous area surrounding Northeastern Oklahoma State University was 9% in 1970, contrasted with the national average of .04% and the Oklahoma average of 4%. Oklahoma has the highest number of Native Americans of the fifty states (97,000 in 1970) and the Cherokee Nation is second only to the Navajo Nation in terms of numbers of people (60,000 vs 90,000.)

In using literature to present such topics as the future of small town America in the Sunbelt, faced with population shifts from the Frost-best, this author has found the works of William Faulkner to be very popular. The Snopes Trillogy found in The Hamlet, The Town, The Mansion, deals with one Flem Snopes of Frenchmen's Bend, Yoknapatawpha County, and establishes the concept of Snopesism, a kind of do-nothingness-until-it-is-too-late syndrome on the part of local citizens who stand by and watch

"Outsiders", portrayed by Flem Snopes and his clan, take over Frenchmen's Bend.

Flem's uncanny cold rapacity makes him evil. Snopesism encompasses cantankerousness, stupidity, malice, selfishness, cold-bloodedness and viciousness. Flem's wife, Eula, is the ultimate of human passion, a fertility goddess, and is compared by Faulkner to a cow. Her bovine qualities are emphasized.[12]

The main point out of Snopesism is that local residents should begin now to make the quality of life in their towns that they would like it to be instead of sitting around until it is too late and the values of small town America have been changed due to the influx of large numbers of new people.

Another popular way of using political science concepts through literature in looking at the future of cities and towns is expressed in Table III where the author has outlined some thoughts from literature on the subject of urban living. These concepts have been the point of many interesting discussions between various town residents and the author.

On the topic of problems of the aged in a small town, the short story, "A Summer Tragedy", written in 1933, by Arna Bontemps is an excellent literary vehicle to teach that utter futility on the part of the elderly can lead to the tragedy of Jeff and Jennie Patton who finally drove their truck into a creek and killed themselves because of debilitating health, advancing senility, and their reluntance to burden anyone.[13] This story could successfully be followed up with a discussion of the work of the Grey Panthers in fighting for the dignity of the elderly.

The role of the political scientist as an Academic Humanist is to help people understand how to improve the quality of their lives. "Giving in to ignorance and to the indifference that ignorance breeds amounts to jeopardising the quality of life in all of its aspects now and later; neither money nor innovation are required to sustain ignorance".[14]

The political scientists' training in analyzing man and his environment provides him with a unique perspective as a facilitator of humanities programs. He is familiar with literature as well as being familiar with contemporary society through human behavior. Therefore, he can illuminate alternatives in social development.

The humanities, rightly pursued, will not redeem us, but they invigorate the work of interpretation and criticism upon which a democracy depends.[15]

Table I

Humanities Grants Awarded to Author

O.H.C.	Title of Grant	Amount
76-017	Tahlequah in the Year 2,000	$1,065.00
76-039	Town Hall 1977-Haskell Horizons	1,309.00
76-05/S.H.	Jenks America: A Summer of Discussion	3,000.00
76-075	Jenks America: Issues of the Seventies	1,083.00
76-076	Bixby Town Hall-1977	1,475.00
78-078	Faces of the Cherokee People: History and Culture-Past and Present	4,682.00
		$12,614.00

Table II

1977-78 Scholars-Teachers
Participating in Oklahoma Humanities Programs

History	66
English	52
Philosophy	18
Art History	4
Religious Studies	7
Sociology	10
Geography	6
Anthropology/Archeology	6
Jurisprudence	5
Humanities	4
Criminal Justice	2
Political Science	8----4%
Linguistics	3
Psychology	5
Total	200

Table III

On Towns and Cities

1. The people are the city.--Shakespeare

2. It is men who make a city, not walls or ships.--Thucydides-410 B.C.

3. Experience shows that a very populous city can seldom, if ever be properly governed; all well-governed cities have a limited population.--Aristotle-322 B.C.

4. The chicken is the country's, but the city eats it.--Herbert-1640

5. The air of cities is unfriendly to infants and children. Every animal is adapted to the use of fresh, natural and free air; the tolerance of artificial air (as that of cities) is the effect of habit, which young animals have not yet acquired.--Arbuthnot-1733

6. God made the country and man made the town.--Cowper--1785

7. When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe.--Thomas Jefferson-1787.

8. We can be nowhere private except in the midst of London.--
Charles Lamb-1800

9. Great Cities must be obliterated from the earth.--Bismarch-1852

10. I loathe the squares and streets,
And the faces that one meets.--Tennyson-1855.

11. The great city is that which has the greatest man or woman,
If it be a few ragged huts, it is still the greatest city in the whole world.--Whitman-1856.

12. The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the center of each and every town or city.--O.W. Holmes-1858

13. Cities give us collision. London and New York take the nonsense out of man.--Emerson-1860.

14. A great city, a great solitude.--Latin Proverb

Footnotes

[1]Jack L. Walker, "Challenges of Professional Development for Political Science in the Next Decade and Beyond", P.S. Vol. 11, no. 4, Fall, 1978 pp. 484-490.

[2]Walker, p. 484.

[3]Myles L. Clowers & Lorin Letendre. Understanding American Politics Through Fiction, New York: McGraw Hill, 1977.

[4]Clowers, p. xi

[5]"Official Guidelines for Proposal Submission and Project Support Application", 1979 Oklahoma Humanities Committee, p. 1.

[6]Remarks by Dr. Robert A. Corrigan, Provost Division of Arts & Humanities, University of Maryland. April 18, 1979, Oklahoma City Oklahoma, Humanities Workshop.

[7]See Table II p. 7.

[8]Edwin J. Delattre. "The Humanities Can Irrigate Deserts", The Chronicle of Higher Education, vol. 15, no. 6, Oct 11, 1977, p. 32.

[9]William F. May. The Humanities and the Civic Self. p. 9.

[10]See Table 1, p. 6.

[11]Larry Sand. "Eastern Oklahoma in the Future", p. 3.

[12]Edmond L. Volpe. A Readers Guide to William Faulkner, p. 306-314.

[13]Arna Bontemps. "A Summer Tragedy" in James Pickering Fiction 100: An Anthology of Short Stories. New York: Macmillan, Inc., 1974.

[14]Edwin J. Delattre. "The Humanities Can Irrigate Deserts". Op. cit. p. 32.

[15]William F. May. "The Humanities and the Civic Self", Op cit. p. 15.

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